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Oh! Sophronisba! Sophronisba! Oh!!

THOMPSON.

The note of exclamation has become, in modern days, one of the most important points in punctuation. Its primitive use our grammars have long since taught us, the time of its introduction into style is uncertain. But, whatever may have been the mode in which it was first employed, it has gradually been

adding new prerogatives and perquisites to its office, as crier of the court of letters. In the newspapers it figures throughout every column: in the dashing warfare of editors, it answers the purposes of invective, explains the surprising phaenomena of the times and shows how brilliant is the wit of the author, who struck with wonder at his own conceptions, expresses his feelings thus. !!! In the Poets' Corner, it calls into Court the Gods, Goddesses and daemons - in the advertisement it proclaims the wickedness of runaway horses, hogs, sailors and wives - announces that French may be thoroughly acquired in two revolutions of the sun; or stands erect in awful majesty behind the bulwark of literature - Rags! Rags! Rags!

On the walls and at the corners of the streets, the exclamatory fonts are exhausted in an infinite variety of ways. Our humane and charitable corporation, trembling for the ancient lungs of this venerable herald, have forcibly taken from him one of the functions, of the exercise of which

the was so tenacious. The unfortunate of both sexes" are left to find their way to the man, who possesses the grand paragonic, by instinct, or by newspaper directions.

The note of exclamation, as well as the dash, have crept into more frequent use in writing, through affectation. To instance with regard to the latter. Because Sterne made more use of the dash than any other mark of time, a herd conceived that by using this stop, they would of course write like that author. And again, the same imitation has succeeded the fame of Byron.

But we may here apply with propriety the text of scripture - old garments will not bear new patches, and old bottles will not hold new wine. To manacle a cripple with ponderous fetters, is but to make him less weaker and expose the absurdity and cruelty of the jailor. Their offices of thought can communicate no energy to their ill marshalled troops; when placed in their proper situations amid a disciplined phalanx, they acquire real respectability themselves; but pow-

: ning with Gorgon visages and looking so big among the refuse of mind, the old regiment resembles Falstaffe's army, dressed in their stolen linen, and with hearts in their stom: aches no bigger than pins' heads.

It is rarity and unusual occurrence, which constitute whatever is extraordinary in nature or art. This may seem simply saying that what is rare, is rare - but we allude to the sublime. Virtue as contradistinguished from vice, we admire, and beau: ty charms us as opposed to deformity. Without their opposites, we could have no conceptions of goodness and no merit; no perception of the agreeable and no pleasure. But that which is indeed sublime, oppresses all the faculties at once - the implied comparison merges in astonishment and awe. Habit however soon deadens these feelings. In the first case, a native of Switzerland, who is born amid the grandeur of nature, and accustomed to behold her in her mightiest efforts feels none of that overwhelming sensation with which a stranger is filled, when his vision is first dimmed and lost in aching gaze

as his eye glances up the suspenders bar-
-riers of the Cantons. And though that im-
-pression cannot be effaced, it is constantly
weakened as they continually present
themselves before him.

To apply these remarks to our pre-
-sent subject. Supposing thoughts to be in
reality novel, excellent, or sublime, the use
of the exclamation point, as it fixes a mark
upon them and in some measure classifies
them, claims impliedly the reader's attention
and demands his admiration. It should be
therefore used with caution and sparingly;
Its dignity is lost by frequent exhibition.

Again - human nature is perverse. We
are not forward to admire the works of
others, and to yield them the silent praise
which bursts from the inmost recesses of
the heart. Vain ourselves, we are fond of
detecting vanity in others. When therefore
we perceive that an authors self regard has
made itself manifest in visible signs of

his pleasure, we overlook the real superiority of the sentiment and the beauty of the expression, because our praise must not be forced violently from us, but must be the spontaneous tribute of gratitude for the satisfaction we have received in perusing a work of merit; and because we are disgusted with an author's vanity, who could not bear it to the public to appreciate his value, without giving them a hint how well he understands it himself. Let us enlarge upon these two last mentioned particulars.

When an author does possess beauties, it is it natural that we should rather be more pleased in discovering them ourselves, than in having them pointed out to us. They strike us with tenfold force, when they are perceived by the unassisted operations of our own minds. When we are led to expect something great, we are very

ften disappointed. Different tastes disagree in the choice of beauties; and above all, an author can be considered no judge of his own ex-=cellencies, because it is well known that the parent regard his offspring with too partial an eye. It would be considered very absurd in a public speaker to give notice to his audience that he was about to move their feelings. The effect would be ridiculous, and the subsequent part of his oration, however exquisite, would fail of its intended influence. And certainly it is no less absurd in a writer to crowd his pages with notes of exclamation, in-=asmuch as they catch the eye, and lead the mind to expect something which does not exist. Unless therefore, there is absolute necessity, this mark rather does injury to the writer, than produces any desirable effect upon the mind or heart of his reader.

L. M. F.

Let us now consider the subject on the score of modesty. Modesty is not confined to any particular species of human character or employment. It may pervade and regulate almost every thing. The really modest, by this we mean not the pertidiously delicate, will seldom do anything in which this propensity feature of their minds is not apparent. They know how to make a proper distinction between propriety and the contrary, when to display their excellencies, and when to shroud them from public observation. They offer what they propose at once to the regard of men, without adding to them any tinsel ornament, or clothing them in any meretricious garb. And if our remarks on punctuation have hitherto been correct, and founded upon a just conception of its proper use, we may apply our ideas on modesty to this also.

To come to the point. Modesty,

or the want of it, is as apparent in punctuation as in any thing else; and we are always tempted set down an author ~~particularly~~ in ~~haste~~ for a man possessed of but a small share of modesty, who endeavors to add importance to his works by the means already mentioned. The abundant use of Italics is a fault into which some men fall, ~~into~~ & which calls loudly for the disapprobation of all. But when to this is superadded the repetition of explamatory marks, it becomes almost disgusting. There are of course occasions, in which this method is necessary; but in common writing, is evidently improper. One instance particularly occurs to us at present to exemplify our observations. The Pastor's fire-side by Anna maria Porter, has the perpetual recurrence, for what purpose we cannot divine, of passages thus distinguished. If they are meant to

L. M.

convey the idea of something out of the ordinary course, we fear that the fair authoress will many times be disappointed. As however, it would be presumption in us to accuse her of want of modesty, we deem it most expedient to withhold further comment.

Punctuation has undergone many changes. The stops in use now cannot be said to mean exactly what they did in earlier times. The full stop now supplies in many cases the place which the semi-colon once occupied. The colon has fallen into comparative disuse; and as much might be said of the other points. We think that modern books abound more in them than they did formerly. This may be owing to the fact, that our sentences are in general shorter, simpler, and less involved than they once were. For the circumlocution of our forefathers

is more compressed; and sentences which once were so tedious as to actually to exhaust the breath in reading them, are now made into several.

The dash may be considered as a stop which the perverted ingenuity of modern time has invented. It would occupy more than one number of the Aeronaut to detail its various uses. As has been once remarked, its use often arises from affectation; & more often, we would suspect, from an ignorance of genuine punctuation. Byron has found it serviceable in the representation of wild & hurried gusts of passion, and similar occasions. But for every petty pretender to the title of an author to assume it as a part of his punctuation, is a stigma upon the public taste which allows it.

In poetry, more licenses may be taken than in prose; but even there, the immoderate use of this kind

of visionary pathos, is ludicrous and absurd. When will all these practices be abolished, and books appear ungarnished by a profusion of Capitals, Italics, exclamatory notes, and dashes? ———————

S.E.